



AS IT IS

Biden Asks US Intelligence to Investigate Beginnings of COVID-19

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President Joe Biden on Wednesday asked U.S. intelligence officials to “**redouble** their efforts” to investigate how the new coronavirus started.

The investigation aims to find out whether the coronavirus came from human contact with an infected animal or from an accident at a Chinese laboratory in Wuhan.

The move follows growing calls in the U.S. and around the world for China to be more open about the beginnings of the pandemic.

Biden asked U.S. intelligence agencies to report on their findings within 90 days. He directed U.S. national laboratories to assist with the investigation. He also called on China to cooperate with international investigations.

Republicans, including former President Donald Trump, have supported the theory that the coronavirus came from a laboratory accident rather than natural infections from animals.

Biden in a statement said the majority of the U.S. intelligence community had considered those two possibilities. But there was not enough information to say that one was more likely than the other.

The president said two agencies favor the animal theory and “one leans more toward” the laboratory theory, adding, “each with low or moderate **confidence**.”

“The United States will also keep working with like-minded partners around the world to press China to **participate** in a full, **transparent**, evidence-based international investigation...,” said Biden. He also called on China to provide all necessary information and evidence.

Earlier on Tuesday, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the administration supports a new World Health Organization (WHO) investigation in China. But she added that an effective investigation would require China to release needed information.

Last February, the WHO sent investigators to China but received limited cooperation from the Chinese government.

Biden said that, without Chinese cooperation, the international investigations will not go anywhere. “The failure to get our inspectors on the ground in those early months will always **hamper** any investigation into the origin of COVID-19,” he said.

Dr. Anthony Fauci is a White House coronavirus adviser. He said Wednesday that he and most others in the scientific community “believe that the most likely **scenario** is that this was a natural occurrence, but [no] one knows that 100 percent for sure.”

Andy Slavitt is an adviser to Biden. He said Tuesday that the world needs to find out, “whatever the answer may be.”

Slavitt added, “We need the WHO to assist in that matter. We don’t feel like we have that now.”

I’m Jonathan Evans.

Zeke Miller and Aamer Madhani reported this story for the Associated Press. Hai Do adapted it for VOA Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.

Words in This Story

redouble -v. to greatly increase size or amount

confidence -*n.* a feeling of belief that something will happen or is true

participate -*v.* to be involved in; to take part in

transparent -*adj.* honest and open; not secretive

hamper -*v.* to slow the movement, progress or action of someone

scenario -*n.* a description of what could possibly happen

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